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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE ON BURMA: IT'S ALL ABOUT CHINA?

REF: A. STATE 33997

[1](#)B. STATE 20000

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt
for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Following the defeat of the Burma resolution in the U.N. Security Council, the MFA -- never fully convinced of the value of a resolution over a presidential statement -- believes Burma is a dead letter in the UNSC and fears further UNSC action would provoke the Chinese, whose cooperation France and the U.S. need on such issues as Nepal and Sri Lanka. For these reasons, the MFA likely will not support the full inclusion of Burma in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict's 2007 Workplan. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff delivered refA demarche March 19 to Benoit Guidee, MFA desk officer in the International Organizations Bureau for the UNSC, Jeremie Petit, desk officer for Burma, and Claudin Serre, desk officer following child soldiers in the Human Rights Bureau. Guidee summarized what has been the French policy on Burma since the resolution failed to pass in the Security Council: Although the GoF supported what he characterized as the USG's "justified" push for a resolution on Burma, it was now time for like-minded nations to acknowledge that scrutiny of Burma by the UNSC is a non-starter for the Chinese, and adjust future strategy accordingly.

[1](#)3. (C) Guidee said the MFA believes that to insist upon Burma's full inclusion in the 2007 workplan of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict could trigger Chinese ire and thereby imperil the working group's broader efforts. Further, the MFA fears that forcing the Burma question now would risk "instrumentalizing8 the working group on child soldiers by using an issue with broad support as a means to accomplish what the draft resolution could not. Finally, Serre worried that focusing only on child soldiers * or on human rights, or on forced labor (refB)) would not capture the scale of Burma's abuses, which are deeply rooted in a lack of good governance and an absence of democracy. "Child soldiers can't substitute for a resolution," she concluded.

[1](#)4. (C) Guidee pointed to China's constructive participation in Security Council negotiations on both Nepal and Sri Lanka, suggesting that it might reconsider its collaborative approach to international negotiations if it believed that other Permanent Members were impinging on Chinese interests in its own backyard. Further, Petit added that the French mission to the U.N. has begun to perceive a change of attitude among the Burmese delegation in New York, and a softening of the delegation's past refusal to acknowledge what other nations view as the undeniable problem of child soldiers in Burma.

[1](#)5. (C) On the question of presumptive discussion of Annex II

countries, Guidee said the MFA recognizes that outstanding procedural concerns remain to be addressed. However, he added that questions on the working group agenda are better discussed between delegations in New York. He did offer that the GoF plans to push for putting Burma on the agenda in November.

16. (C) COMMENT: Child soldiers is FM Douste-Blazy's signature issue. His stated determination to lead international efforts to combat child soldiers, combined with the MFA's sensitivity to China and its original preference for a PRST versus a resolution, makes it unlikely that the French would revisit their position and add Burma to the workplan. In that vein, the MFA reminded us that China, but not the U.S., had attended the February 6 conference in Paris on child soldiers. END COMMENT.

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